ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE GOSLING ROAD EXTENSION PROJECT IN NORTH CENTRAL HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS: PHASE II

Texas Antiquities Permit Number 1483

by

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Contract Report Number 37

1995

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE GOSLING ROAD EXTENSION PROJECT IN NORTH CENTRAL HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS: PHASE II

Brazos Valley Research Associates

Project Number 95-01

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ABSTRACT

A cultural resources investigation of the proposed Gosling Road extension between Kuykendahl and Spring Stuebner roads in north central Harris County was conducted by Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) on February 2, 1995. This work was performed under Texas Antiquities Committee permit number 1483 and the area investigated was 3/4 mile long with a 100 foot right-of-way. The survey did not locate any significant cultural resources although the right-of-way passed through two areas containing historic structures and debris. These historic sites were identified in the field as a farm/ranch complex dating to the latter part of the 19th century and later and a post-1950 structure made of cinder blocks that have collapsed, a large cement slab, and an unusual, circular structure made of modern brick and mortar.

The main part of the farm/ranch complex is outside the project area right-of-way and was not assigned a formal site number. The post-1950 structure, slab, and circular structure not assigned a formal site number because of their recent age. It is recommended that construction be allowed to proceed as planned.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the following for their assistance during this project. At the management level I acknowledge W. K. Berg and Steve McElyea for providing me with the proper maps and other support. Roger G. Moore accompanied me on this survey and I greatly appreciate his help. Carolyn Spock, Head of Records at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) in Austin, Texas and her staff, Rosario Casarez and Jean Hughes, are acknowledged for helping me with the records check at their office for this project. Finally, I am indebted to Mark Denton of the Texas Antiquities Committee for his advice regarding the proper methods and for helping with the permit application process.

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DEFINITION OF STUDY AREA

Harris County plans to improve an approximate 4.13 mile segment of Gosling Road by increasing the existing 60 foot right-of-way to 180 feet. In addition, a new section of road will be constructed between Spring Stuebner and Kuykendahl roads for a distance of 3/4 mile. This new section was not flagged at the time of the initial survey by Brazos Valley Research Associates (Moore 1993) and was not investigated at that time. The 3/4 mile segment was later flagged and is the subject of this report. The area investigated is depicted on United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' topographic quadrangle, Tomball (Figure 1).

The soils of the project area are depicted on Sheet 12 of the Harris County soil survey (Wheeler 1976). According to the soils book, the majority of the project area consists of Wockley fine sandy loam (Wo). This soil type is defined by Wheeler (1976:232) as a nearly level soil in broad areas of prairie and forest. This soil is used mainly for rice and improved pastures of Bermuda grass or bahia grass with limited acreage used for timber, woodland grazing, and row crops. It is a poorly drained soil and excess water on the surface during rainy periods is the main problem in managing this soil.

A portion of the project area consists of Gessner loam (Ge) as defined by Wheeler (1976:14-15). This soil is defined as a nearly level soil in broad, irregular areas and in small, round depressions. It is lower on the landscape than adjacent soils. In places, this soil is wet or ponded for long periods after heavy rains. Gessner loam is used mainly for native pasture, improved pasture, and rice. It is poorly drained and is generally saturated in wet periods.

The project area right-of-way passed through a varied terrain that ranged from open pasture to woods. Parts of the project area were low and contained standing water while other areas were higher in elevation. Several natural mounds were observed rising from one of the low-lying areas. While the surrounding area contained standing water, these mounds were dry and well drained. Much of the area was in use as farm/ranch land as indicated by cattle and features associated with livestock such as fences, water troughs, and outbuildings.

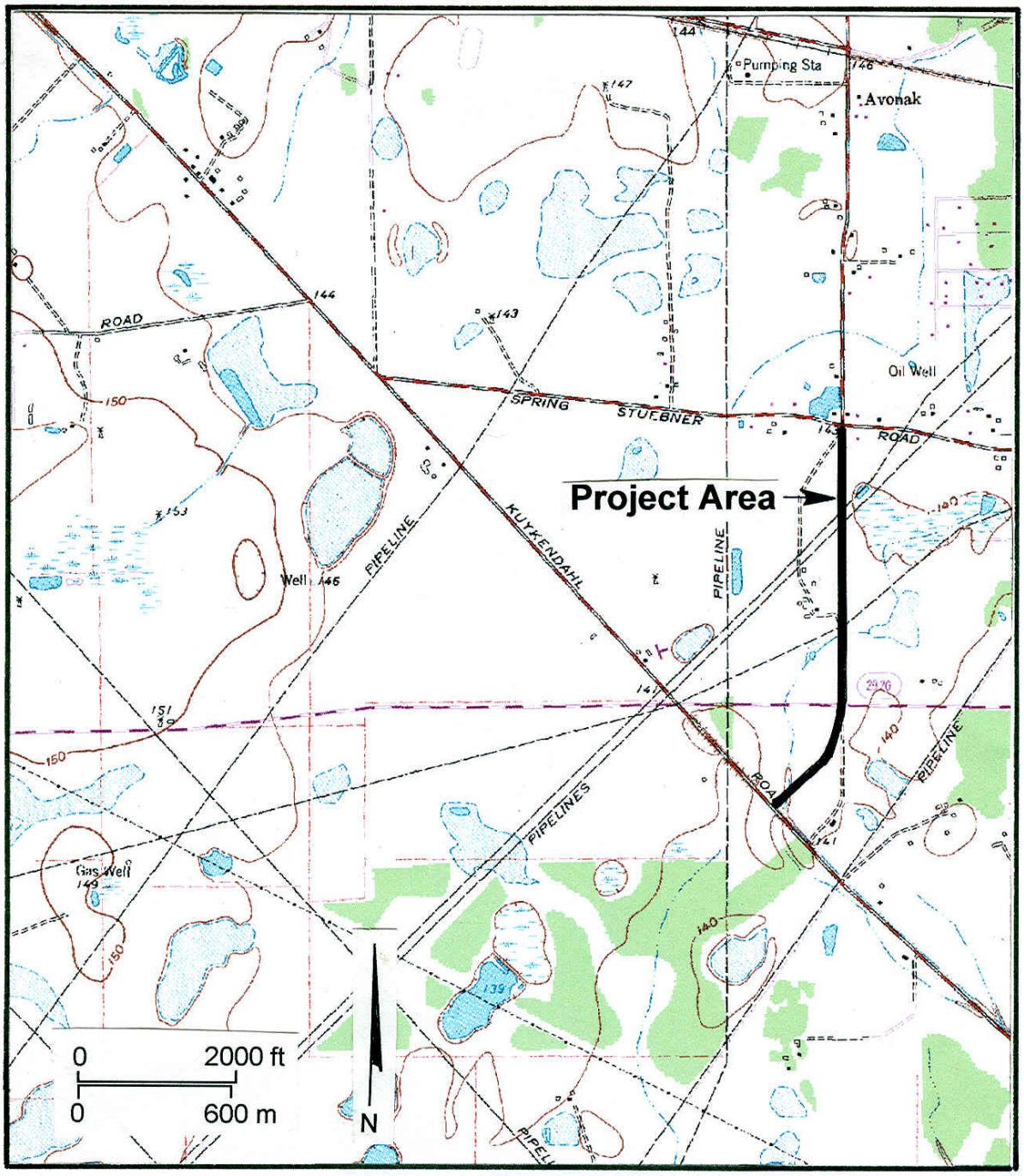

Figure 1. Project Area Depicted on Topographic Map Tomball

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Harris County plans to improve an approximate 4.13 mile segment of Gosling Road from Spring Creek to Spring Stuebner Road by increasing the existing 60 foot right-of-way to 180 feet. In addition, a new section of road will be constructed between Spring Stuebner and Kuykendahl roads for a distance of 3/4 mile. This new section was not flagged at the time of the initial survey by Brazos Valley Research Associates (Moore 1993) and was not investigated at that time. The 3/4 mile segment was later flagged and is the subject of this report. The area investigated during this survey is depicted on United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' topographic quadrangle, Tomball.

This project was sponsored by Berg, Oliver Associates, Inc. of Houston, Texas who contracted with Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) of Bryan, Texas to conduct the field work and prepare the report. William E. Moore, *SOPA* of BVRA acted as Principal Investigator and performed the field survey with assistance from Roger G. Moore. The field survey required 16 man hours and was conducted on February 2, 1995 under Texas Antiquities Committee Permit Number 1483. The project number assigned by BVRA is 95-01.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The objective of this study was to identify all cultural resources, if any, present within the project area right-of-way and make a determination regarding their research potential. This project was carried out utilizing the pedestrian survey method supported by shovel testing. In addition to subsurface shovel testing a visual inspection was made of exposed areas in likely settings for prehistoric or historic sites. The entire project area was walked by two archaeologists following linear transects and separated by each other by an interval of approximately 30 feet. In the field the investigators used a project map supplied by the client and USGS topographic maps.

RESULTS

The survey did not record any significant cultural resources, although the right-of-way passed through two areas containing historic structures and debris. The first locality is in the northern segment just to the north of F.M. 2920 and consists of a farm or ranch complex with house, outbuildings, and corrals. The house is outside the right-of-way and has been destroyed by fire. Based on the presence of cut nails and handmade bricks, it is probable that the house was initially constructed during the latter part of the 19th century. The only portion of this historic site within the right-of-way at the time of the survey was one of the pens or corrals. Because the main part of the site is not in the project area right-of-way, this locality was not formally investigated and recorded as a historic site and no artifacts were collected. The pen or corral within the project area right-of-way is not architecturally or historically significant.

The second historic structure consists of a post-1950 structure made of cinder blocks that has collapsed, a large cement slab, and an unusual, circular structure made of modern brick and mortar. Although the function of the circular structure is not known to the researchers, the presence of a windmill base nearby suggests that is was used as some sort of water feature. Several large oaks were observed on the site which is situated on a natural rise above the surrounding low-lying areas. Virtually all of the high ground was covered with the concrete slab making shovel testing not feasible. Based on the apparent recent age of this locality, it was not recorded as a site. It is located at survey marker 33 + 00. No artifacts were collected.

No evidence of prehistoric occupation was found; however, several interesting areas were investigated. Three natural mounds rising above the low lying areas were observed within the path of the right-of-way. These features resemble pimple mounds found in other parts of Harris and nearby counties. The three mounds were shovel tested and found to be sterile in terms of cultural materials. At the time of this survey there was standing water in the area around the mounds yet the mounds were dry and well drained. The soil present in each of the mounds was a sandy loam which remained fairly consistent in color and texture until it became wet from ground water seepage. Although the shovel tests in the mounds exceeded 80 centimeters, hard clay was not encountered. There was no evidence of disturbance, and we believe them to be natural geological phenomena, not created by artificial means. Sites occurring on pimple mounds in other areas are typically shallow - within 60 centimeters. Therefore, we believe our level of testing was adequate.

The first mound was at marker 21 + 00. Two shovel tests (ST) were dug in this area with ST 1 from 0-105 cm and ST 2 from 0-80 cm. The second mound was at marker 23 + 00. One shovel test (ST 3) was dug to 90 cm. The third mound was at marker 24 + 00. One shovel test (ST 4) was dug in this area to 80 cm.

Based on the soil description in the Harris County soils book, it appears that the mounds are located within the boundaries of the Wockley fine sandy loam mapping unit. According to Wheeler's (1976:23) description, Wockley soils contain "areas of narrow, irregularly shaped ridges and low circular mounds where the Wockley soil has a thicker surface layer than the one described as representative of the series." These inclusions make up less than 15 percent of any mapped area.

A small wooded spot in the middle of a large cleared area at marker 9 + 00 in the southern segment south of F.M. 2920 was observed. It seemed unusual for this area not to have been cleared. Isolated graves or small family cemeteries have been found in similar settings. Because it was beyond the scope of this investigation to clear this tract to look for signs of graves, further work may be warranted in order to make sure the proposed construction will not adversely impact an isolated burial or small family cemetery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that construction be allowed to proceed as planned with the following stipulation. Should evidence of a prehistoric or historic site, other than that discussed above, be encountered during construction, all work should cease until the situation can be evaluated by the Texas Antiquities Committee. Special attention should be paid to the area at marker 9 + 00 to make sure historic graves are not disturbed.

REFERENCES CITED

Moore, William E.
1993 *Archaeological Survey of the Gosling Road Extension Project in North Central Harris County, Texas.* Brazos Valley Research Associates, Contract Report Number 23.

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